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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6329  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7606  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1307  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6281  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3354  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1696  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6306  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7927  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8273  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 NEW DELHI 000817

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BHARAT BALLOT 09: ROUND TWO OF INDIAN  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: BHARAT BALLOT 09 SERIES

11. Summary: (U) On April 23, Indian voters cast their ballots in 141 election districts across 13 states in the second of five phases of parliamentary elections. Polling in the second phase was mostly peaceful and smooth. Final turnout numbers were not available at COB, but turnout appeared to be slow in the early hours of polling, in part due to searing heat in many parts of the country. Votes will be counted and results announced on May 16 after all five phases of polling have been completed and 714 million voters have had a chance to cast their ballot to elect a new lower house of parliament and a new government. End Summary.

Halfway There  
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12. (U) Voters in 13 states went to the polls in the second and largest of five phases of India's national parliamentary elections. The second phase comprised 141 of India's 543 seats. The total electorate in these constituencies was 195 million; 2,041 candidates from 166 political parties contested for these seats. In the first two rounds an electorate of 353 million (out of a total of 714 million) has made its selection for 265 (out of a total of 543) seats in the lower house of parliament. The next round of polls takes place on April 30. Counting will take place and results announced on May 16 after the completion of all five phases of polling over the next month.

Slow Early Turnout  
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13. (U) The Election Commission will report preliminary turnout a few hours after polls close. Early voter turnout was sluggish, in part due to the searing heat in parts of the country that went to the polls. Two election officials in Orissa died because of the heat. The final turnout is expected to pick up by the end of the day and be in line with previous elections.

Peaceful Polls

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¶4. (U) The April 23 poll was an extremely peaceful and orderly one, in the Indian context. There were no reported deaths or serious injuries on poll day. There were scattered Maoist-linked disruptions to polling in Bihar and Jharkhand, including a landmine blast and a reported train highjacking a day before the polls, and an apparent attack on a polling station on polling day. Reports of poll-related violence came in from four different places in Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's home district of Kadapa. There were also reports of disturbances from Praja Rajyam President Chiranjeevi's constituency in the temple town of Tirupati. There was a report of a clash between Congress Party and Telegu Desam Party at a polling booth in Mydukuru in Andhra Pradesh.

#### Big Names Contestants

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¶5. (U) Some of the prominent personalities contesting during phase 2 include: Rahul Gandhi; GOI Ministers Sharad Pawar (Agriculture), Sushil Kumar Shinde (Power), Kamal Nath (Commerce and Industry), Ram Vilas Paswan (Chemicals and Fertilizers, Steel), A.R. Antulay (Minority Affairs); BJP leader Sushma Swaraj; Chairman of India's Olympic Committee BJP's Suresh Kalmadi; Andhra Pradesh Congress Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy; Telegu Desam Party leader Chandrababu Naidu; Praja Rajyam President Chiranjeevi; UPA leader Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule; Former Indian Coal Minister and former Jharkhand Chief Minister Shibu Soren; Maharashtra BJP leader Gopinath Munde; Assam United Democratic Front's Badruddin

NEW DELHI 00000817 002 OF 004

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#### The Contested States

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¶6. (U) The 141 parliamentary constituencies going to the polls in the first phase are located in the following states:  
-- Assam (11/14 seats; polling in state completed in phases 1 and 2)  
-- Manipur (1/1 seat)  
-- Tripura (2/2 seats)  
-- Bihar (13/40 seats; polling for 26/40 seats completed in phases 1 and 2)  
-- Jharkhand (8/14 seats; polling in state completed in phases 1 and 2)  
-- Orissa (11/21 seats; polling in state completed in phases 1 and 2; concurrent state assembly elections)  
-- Uttar Pradesh (17/80 seats; polling for 33/80 completed in phases 1 and 2)  
-- Andhra Pradesh (20/42 seats; polling in state completed in phases 1 and 2; concurrent state assembly elections)  
-- Maharashtra (25/48 seats; polling for 38/48 seats completed in phases 1 and 2;)  
-- Goa (2/2 seats)  
-- Karnataka (17/28 seats)  
-- Madhya Pradesh (13/29 seats)  
-- Jammu and Kashmir (1 out of 6 seats; polling of 2/6 seats completed in phases 1 and 2)

¶7. (U) The Election Commission has prohibited exit polls on grounds that they can be manipulated and could influence voter behavior in subsequent rounds. It is not possible, therefore, to get a quick read on any trends or patterns in how voters cast their ballots today. It will take a few days before the buzz from internal party surveys and political pundits' analysis begins to make the rounds on how the parties fared in this round in the various states.

#### Tidbits

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-- Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cast his vote in Assam, from where he an appointed member of parliament to the upper house

and did not contest the Lok Sabha elections.

-- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik of Orissa whose Biju Janata Dal pulled out of its alliance with the BJP ahead of the elections ruled out support to either the Congress Party or the BJP in Delhi after the election. He called a tie-up with the BJP "untenable" after the violence against Christians in Kandhamal last year.

-- Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said he had told his UPA colleagues that "we should keep the Left with us" because the UPA will need their support.

Communist leader Prakash Karat said that it is "not possible" for his party to form a government with the Congress Party.

-- AIADMK's Jayalalithaa said that a politician never rules out anything but what she is looking for is a "dispensation which is non-Congress, non-BJP government."

-- Lok Janashakti Party leader Ram Vilas Paswan said that after the elections are completed UP and Bihar regional party leaders Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Paswan will "call the shots."

#### Eastern India - 46 Seats

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¶8. (U) In eastern, India 46 seats were at stake in Bihar,

NEW DELHI 00000817 003 OF 004

Jharkhand, Orissa, Assam, Manipur and Tripura in the second round of the polls on April 23. Voters in Orissa also cast their ballots to elect a new state legislative assembly. With the second round, elections are now over in Jharkhand, Orissa and Assam; however, Bihar has two more phases to go while West Bengal begins its three phases on April 30.

¶9. (U) While development is an electoral issue all across the east, each state has its own supplementary electoral issue: good governance in Bihar; political instability in Jharkhand; religious violence in Orissa; and Bangladeshi migration in Assam. Whereas caste plays a significant role in dictating electoral behavior in Bihar, in Jharkhand, Orissa and Assam tribe and ethnicity are more significant factors. The discord within the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in Bihar and in Jharkhand along with the split in National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Orissa have thrown the traditional electoral alliances out the window. Predictions are that the BJP in Jharkhand and the Congress in Orissa will make gains over regional parties. Regional parties are expected to improve on their 2004 performance in Bihar (Janata Dal-United) and Assam (Assam United Democratic Front.)

#### Western India - 40 Seats

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¶10. (U) In the second phase of elections, 25 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra headed to the polls, in a swath down the center of the state and into the Konkan region along the southwestern coast. In Madhya Pradesh 13 of 26 seats went to the polls in the eastern part of the state. Bhopal voted in this second round, but Indore and the western reaches of the state go to the polls on April 30th. Voters also cast their ballots for Goa's two seats. All western Indian seats were essentially Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - Congress contests, with the Shiv Sena partnering with the BJP and the National Congress Party (NCP) partnering with Congress in Maharashtra. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) sought to gain ground, but observers did not think the party would be much of a spoiler for either party.

¶11. (U) Voter turnout was not available at COB. While traditionally voter turnout is 60-70 percent in national

elections, reports are that as of midday only about 15 percent of those eligible had yet cast their votes in Maharashtra. Voter turnout in Madhya Pradesh is reportedly down from 87 percent in the last national election to only 21 percent as of 1 pm. Voting in Goa is also reportedly proceeding slowly. The chief electoral office reported that as of 11 am only 10.4 percent of the votes were polled in North Goa, while the response in South Goa was poorer at 8.4 percent.

#### Southern India - 37 Seats

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¶12. (U) Voters in seventeen constituencies in Karnataka went to the polls today. An estimated 20.6 million voters will decide the fate of the 273 candidates looking to represent Karnataka in New Delhi. From all accounts polling was quite peaceful and voter turnout is estimated at 60 percent. For the most part this election will be a be a three-legged race with the BJP, Congress and Janata Dal-Secular (JDS) battling out to win the seventeen seats up for grabs. Initial assessments in the days before the polls are that the BJP is expected to perform well in the state, possibly matching its 2004 performance when it picked up 18 of the state's 28 seats.

¶13. (U) The second phase in Andhra Pradesh included elections in 20 parliamentary and 140 state assembly constituencies across four districts in Rayalseema and six

NEW DELHI 00000817 004 OF 004

districts in south Coastal Andhra. Together with the 22 seats that went to the polls in the phase, state assembly and parliamentary elections are now over in the state. Unlike during the first phase, elaborate security arrangements to ensure peaceful polling leaked a bit in phase two, with a few reports of violence. Media contacts indicate that there was only a 12-13 percent turnout in the first few hours and electronic media reports only a 50 percent turnout by the end of the day (both figures are slightly lower than during the first phase). Since polling began this morning local media have talking up the possibility of a TDP victory and in private government officials are describing the race as 'neck and neck'

#### Northern India - 18 Seats

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¶13. (U) Besides one seat in Jammu and Kashmir, voters went to the polls in 17 seats in central Uttar Pradesh (UP). The total electorate in this portion of the state is 25 million. UP, India's largest state, sends 80 members to the Lok Sabha.

Rahul Gandhi's seat of Amethi voted today and will no doubt return the Congress Party scion to parliament. Rahul's sister Priyanka campaigned extensively for her brother over the last several weeks in the largely rural constituency. But the main fight in UP remains between the Bahujan Samaj Party of Chief Minister Mayawati and its archrival, Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party. In the 2004 election the SP and the BSP won six and nine seats respectively from these seventeen, while the BJP and Congress Party each won one. Early reports put turnout at a relatively low 30 percent midway through the very hot day. The Jammu and Kashmir contest is for the Udhampur seat in the Jammu region. The BJP candidate is narrowly favored in a four way contest that includes the Congress, the People's Democratic Party and the Panthers Party.

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